'Aiding gli Ebrei' - Delasem under fascism, 1939 to 1945

Laura Bava

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‘Aiding gli Ebrei’ - Delasem under Fascism, 1939 to 1945

This thesis is presented for the degree of Master of Arts

University of Notre Dame Australia

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Submitted by Laura Bava
Declaration of Authorship

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________________________________________  ___________________________
Laura Bava                                  Date
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jews in the Italian peninsula</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussolini’s ambition for an Italian Empire</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beginning of the Italian Holocaust</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question and aims</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 - LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appeasement group</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The genocide group</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 - DELEGAZIONE ASSISTENZA EMIGRATI EBREI</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem’s operations between December 1939 and June 1940</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem’s role between June 1940 and December 1941</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian internment camps</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decreasing of Delasem’s exodus activities</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Delasem’s structure</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem’s activities between June 1941 and September 1943</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem’s clothing appeal</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical assistance provided by Delasem</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem’s aid appeal for non-Italian Jews children</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem: re-establishing its role</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Delasem’s role between June 1941 and September 1943</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delasem September 1943 to May 1945</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3 - INTERPRETATION

Genocide versus appeasement

Delasem evidence supporting the appeasement argument

Evidence supporting the genocide group

Delasem’s documents in the context of Fascist government attitudes to Jewish people

The tabling of the Racial Laws in 1938

The 1938 census of Jewish people

Foreign Jewish people in Italy post 1939

The establishing of internment camps

Summary: the Fascist government’s attitude to Jewish people through Delasem documents

The Fascist government compared with the Nazis

Summary – the appeasement and genocide debate

Finally, Delasem’s existence due to Fascist help

Nazi and Italian Fascist anti-Semitic policies

CHAPTER 4 - CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Figures

Figure 1: Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, Rome May 1938 12
Figure 2: Pietro Badoglio, the Italian Prime Minister from September 1943 16
Figure 3: The signing of the armistice between Italian and Allied representatives, Cassibile, 3 September 1943 18
Figure 4: A group of internees play stringed instruments in the Campagna internment camp. Walter Wolff is standing second from the right 32
Figure 5: The Historical Archives of the Jewish community of Rome (ASCER, centre) Rome 2012 40
Figure 6: Dante Almansi, President of Delasem Genoa, 1939 43
Figure 7: Lelio Vittorio Valobra, Vice-President of Delasem Genoa, 1939 44
Figure 8: The location of the Jewish communities in 1938 45
Figure 9: Delasem’s Office, Lungotevere Sanzio, Rome 2012 49
Figure 10: Genoa port, 1940 54
Figure 11: The location of internment camps in Italy and occupied territories 59
Figure 12: Foreign Jewish and local police on the steps of San Bartolomeo internment camp, Campagna 1940 62
Figure 13: Jewish refugees in Lisbon boarding a ship transporting them to the United States, June 1941 74
Figure 14: Pupils and teachers at Ferramonti di Tarsia internment school, 1941 81
Figure 15: Convento dei Capuccini, Via Sicilia 159, Rome, 1943 87
Figure 16: Joint Distribution Committee representatives visit childcare facilities at a displaced persons camp, Europe, 1945 90
Abstract

This study investigated how the organisation Delasem (‘Delegazione Assistenza Emigrati Ebrei’) operated unrestricted in their support of Jewish people under Mussolini’s Fascist regime between 1939 and 1943. It includes a brief historical background of Italy that focuses on the life of Jewish people since their first arrival in Italy about 2000 years ago. This historical section was presented so that the reader could understand Italian culture and its changing attitude to Italian and non-Italian Jewish people in Italy. This section outlined the circumstances of Italian Jews under Mussolini’s Fascist regime that resulted in Delasem’s formation and the flood of Jewish refugees into Italy from parts of Nazi occupied Europe.

The result of this thesis’ research question is that Delasem operated as an aid agency for Jewish people from 1939 to 1943 because of direct and indirect assistance from Mussolini and his Fascist regime.

The study of Delasem’s documents allows one to understand what happened in Italy to Jewish people from the promulgation of the ‘Leggi Raziali’ in 1938 to the fall of Mussolini’s Fascist regime in 1943. It complements and contributes to other research on the topic of the dichotomy that exists between Mussolini and the Jews in Italy. There is a division between those believing that Mussolini was ambivalent to the issues of Jewish people in Italy and those who consider Mussolini to be little different to the more infamous Nazi individuals associated with the murder of about six million Jewish people.

This research complements and contributes to the study of Jewish people in Axis countries during the Second World War. Furthermore, it shows how Mussolini allowed Delasem to exist and to operate in an environment supposedly hostile to pro-Jewish views after the Fascist government tabled the Racial Laws in 1938.